

When I finished high school in 1964, we had low unemployment, low inflation, high growth, high expectations, and most people believed that the President and the Congress would find an orderly, legal way to meet the civil rights challenges of this country, to meet our responsibilities in the cold war, and to move on to greater heights. And a lot of people, frankly, just took it for granted and didn't see a lot of the big challenges there in the way that they might. Plus which, time and chance intervened.

All I know is, when I finished high school, everybody in America thought we were headed in the right direction, no interruptions ahead. Two years later, we were divided over Vietnam; we had riots in the streets. Trying to meet both obligations undermined our economy. It has taken us 35 years to get back to the point, as a nation, that we were then.

I'm not saying to you this as a President or a Democrat. As a citizen, as an American, I have waited for 35 years for my country to be in a position where we could build the future of our dreams for our children and be genuinely good neighbors to people around the world. And we have tools to do it now and the absence of clouds that were not there 35 years ago.

That's why I'm here; that's why I'm going to do more of these things. Because people tend to get in trouble—individually, in families, at work, and as nations—in two kinds of circumstances, and anybody that's over 30 here will identify with both. One is, you tend to do really stupid things when you get mad and hurt and exhausted because you can't sleep, because you're so mad, hurt, and exhausted. The second time when you make a lot of mistakes is when you think things are going so well, there are no consequences to what you do, and so you don't have to think and plan and look ahead and deal with the big stuff. That is what we face today. Democracies are great in times of crisis; we were hell on wheels in the Depression. We were great in World War II. We had a remarkable constancy all during the cold war, notwithstanding the fact that we had disagreements over the details.

What are we going to do now with all this? That is the great question. I trust Jane Harman to not let us forget that we're going to

double the number of people over 65 in the next 30 years, to not let us forget that the children of this country are growing more numerous and more diverse, and they'll either be our greatest asset or a big drag on the world we're trying to build.

You know, I trust her to deal with these big things that I talked about in the State of the Union Address. And I trust you to continue to support that. When you go home tonight and you think about how many more times somebody's going to ask you to show up at one of these things this year, you think about how many times you'd rather be doing something else, you think about how tiring this gets, you just remember this, especially those of you that are around my age: We have waited for 35 years. And we must make sure the American people—in this Presidential race, in these congressional races, in everything we say and do—dominate the conviction of America to make the most of this moment.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:54 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Jane Harman, candidate for California 36th Congressional District, and her husband, Sidney, chief executive officer, Harman International Industries, Inc.; Representative Nancy Pelosi; Representative Brad Sherman; Molly Raiser, member of the board of directors, Coalition for a Democratic Majority, and her daughter Skye; former Vice Presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro; Jack Valenti, president, Motion Picture Association of America; and Lloyd Hand, executive committee member, Congressional Economic Leadership Institute.

Remarks on Departure for the Library of Congress and an Exchange With Reporters

February 4, 2000

Commerce in Firearms Report

The President. Good morning. Before I leave to go up to the Hill, I'd like to say a few words about an important new report I've just received on how guns flow from the legal firearms market to criminals and to talk about the unprecedented new actions that we're taking to block that flow.

Keeping guns out of the wrong hands has been a priority for 7 years for us, and we

have made some real progress with the Brady law, with the ban on assault weapons, cracking down on illegal gun dealing to young people, with increased Federal prosecutions of gun crimes, and beginning with the directive I issued in 1993, we have nearly quadrupled the number of traces that the ATF performs on guns used in crimes.

With the help of these and other efforts, we've cut gun crime by 35 percent since 1993, and homicide is at its lowest rate in over 30 years. But as I said last week in The State of the Union, no one believes America is safe enough, and it's time we set the proper goal to make our Nation the safest big country in the world.

We can do that by building on our progress and applying lessons learned. Some crucial lessons are captured in this ground breaking new report by ATF, the most comprehensive look at the firearm industry ever done by the National Government. Thanks to its increased tracing of crime guns, the ATF has been able to uncover an astonishing fact: Only one percent of the gun dealers in America sell over 57 percent of the guns used in crime. These findings confirm a pattern that Senator Chuck Schumer has talked about for several months, and I want to thank him for his leadership on this issue.

In response to the findings in this report, I'm pleased to announce today that we're beginning the most aggressive effort ever undertaken to ensure responsible behavior by gun dealers. Dealers whose guns most frequently wind up in criminals' hands will now be subject to intense scrutiny by ATF. All dealers will be required to do a more thorough job of reporting gun thefts. In a moment, Secretary Summers, in a briefing, will explain to you how these and other actions will work in more detail.

The tragic shooting last year in Columbine High School showed us what happens when guns fall into the wrong hands. The actions I've announced today will enable the Federal Government to do a better job in fulfilling our responsibility to reduce gun violence.

Others have responsibilities, too. The gun industry must do its part. As I've said before, there are responsible citizens in that industry, manufacturers and dealers. They can help us to keep the guns out of the wrong

hands. And Congress must fulfill its responsibility as well.

As its first order of business this year, I've asked Congress to pass commonsense gun safety legislation to close the gun show loophole, to require safety locks with all new handguns, to ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips. And again, I repeat my call from the State of the Union that all new handgun buyers be required to have photo licenses from their States showing they passed the Brady background check and a gun safety course.

Congress has a responsibility, too, to provide law enforcement agencies, including the ATF, with the authority and resources they need to do their jobs. Under current law, ATF can only inspect a gun dealer, no matter how flagrant the problems are. And as I said, one percent of the dealers provide 57 percent of the guns used in crime. Under current law, ATF is only permitted to inspect such dealerships once a year.

Today, I asked Congress, as I did last year, to remove this restriction, allow ATF to make up to three unannounced visits per year. I also asked Congress to fund my plan to hire 1,000 more Federal and local gun prosecutors, more ATF agents and inspectors to crack down on these illegal gun traffickers and violent gun criminals. And finally, I asked Congress to provide law enforcement with the tools to trace every gun and every bullet used in every crime in America.

When 12 children are dying every day in America because of gun violence, however, we can't wait for congressional action. That's why I'm taking the actions that I have announced today. We've seen the progress we can make when Americans at every level, from neighborhoods to local police departments, to State and Federal Government, take responsibility for fighting crime. Working together, we've brought crime down for 7 straight years. We can keep going until America is the safest big country in the world.

I want to again say how grateful I am to the people who are here: Secretary Summers; Treasury Under Secretary for Enforcement Jim Johnson; our ATF Director,

Brad Buckles. And as I said, Secretary Summers will talk in the briefing room in more detail after I leave.

Unemployment Levels

Let me just say one final thing before I go. I want to comment on the fact that we have just learned that unemployment last month fell to 4.0 percent, the lowest in three decades. Since 1993, our economy has now created nearly 21 million jobs. Today, strong employment numbers confirm, once and for all, that this is the longest economic expansion in our history.

The milestone is a credit to the American people, to their hard work. It also clearly highlights the need for us to stay on the path of fiscal discipline, overseas markets, investment in our people, that got us to this point. And I thank you very much.

Austria

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*call the U.S. Ambassador from Austria, or take any other specific measures, now that the Government includes the Freedom Party?

The President. I have to go up to the Hill. Secretary Albright is going to have an announcement on that today, in just a couple of hours.

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Q. [*Inaudible*] Northern Ireland, sir? Any updates on the situation there?

Q. The process is once again in a crisis.

The President. Let me just say again—I may have more to say about that in the next couple of days—it is at a very pivotal moment, as all of you have reported. We are working very hard on that. I have spent a lot of time on it; our whole team has.

I think that right now, the less we say publicly, the better. We are working intensely on this. It is imperative that everybody live up to the requirements of the Good Friday accord, which was overwhelmingly adopted by the people of Northern Ireland in both communities. And everybody that's an actor here needs to follow the will of the people. We're working on it.

Q. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 a.m. in the South Grounds at the White House.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Bob Squier

February 4, 2000

Prudy; to the members of your family; to all of us who were friends of Bob Squier. The Scripture summons us, "neglect not the gift that is in thee." Today we celebrate a man who did not neglect his gift but instead shared it.

We have heard it in the stories of his sons, his partner, his friends, and they have caused us all to flood our minds and hearts with memories of Bob Squier's passion for life, for his family, his work, for politics. Vice President Gore and I, in particular, are the beneficiaries of that passion and of his abundant American optimism.

As has already been said, no matter how dark the night, Bob was always sure the Sun would come up in the morning, and if it didn't, he would still find a way to get a tan. [*Laughter*] This sort of optimism was in rather short supply right after the elections in 1994, and most people thought that there were better investments in American politics than the reelection of Bill Clinton and Al Gore. Not Bob Squier. He saw it as sort of a minor challenge. He was there for us, and but for him, we might not be here today. There is something to be said for boundless optimism.

I think we ought to acknowledge, as has already been done, that this was a man whose passion for politics was part of a kaleidoscopic view of life and a wide range of interests. In addition to his documentaries about our great authors, he was also a pioneer in music television: one of the youngest producers of the Boston Pops on PBS; the executive producer of the first live global satellite TV show featuring the Beatles. He even talked about working years ago with the Rolling Stones, which probably makes him the only person in his line of work in the entire world who could say that he worked with everyone from Keith Richards to Ann Richards. [*Laughter*]

Bob Squier was many things. They have all been described today: a brilliant strategist, incisive commentator, trusted adviser, loyal friend. Above all, though, I think he was a storyteller. He knew how to tell a story, and